



**U.S. Department of Justice  
U.S. Attorney's Office  
Western District of Texas**

**Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**MEXICAN NATIONAL EXTRADITED TO U.S. SENTENCED TO 25 YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON  
FOR ROLE IN "LOS TRES DE LA SIERRA" DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATION**

**United States Attorney Johnny Sutton** announced that in Midland this afternoon, 62-year-old Gracielo Gardea-Carrasco, a Mexican National extradited from Mexico in January along with 15 other high-profile defendants, was sentenced to 25 years in federal prison on drug charges.

United States District Judge Robert Junell also ordered that Gardea not receive any credit from the six years he spent imprisoned in Mexico towards his 25-year prison term.

In April 2007, Gardea pleaded guilty to one count each of conspiracy and possession with intent to distribute more than 100 kilograms of marijuana. According to the factual basis filed in this case, Gardea was a member of the Los Tres de la Sierra drug trafficking organization headed by Francisco Rios "Kiko" Balderrama, Armando "Mando" Garcia Quiroz and Ruben Valdez Carrasco. Throughout the Ojinaga, Chihuahua, Mexico region, this organization "held the Plaza" or controlled marijuana smuggling into the U.S. and subsequent distribution efforts. From January 1996 to September 2000, this organization was responsible for the importation and distribution of approximately 75 tons of marijuana in the Western District of Texas. Also, at the request of Kiko Balderrama, Gardea facilitated a double homicide committed in May 1998 by Armando Garcia Quiroz. Gardea placed a phone call to one of the victims luring him to Gardea's house in Mexico where the murders took place.

For their leadership roles in the continuing criminal enterprise, Balderrama and Quiroz are currently serving life sentences in federal prison; Carrasco, a 252-month federal prison term.

This case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration Task Forces in Alpine, Midland, Dallas-Fort Worth and Waco, Texas, and Kansas. The murder investigations were conducted by the Texas Rangers. Integral to the drug investigation were the Midland Police Department, United States Border Patrol, Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigations and United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Assistant United States Attorneys Mark Roomberg and Jay Miller prosecuted this case on behalf of the Government.

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